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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CHISINAU 000826

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STATE FOR EUR/UMB

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PBTS](#) [EAID](#) [PINR](#) [MD](#)  
SUBJECT: NEW DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER FOR  
REINTEGRATION OSIPOV OFF TO GOOD START

Classified by: Ambassador Asif J. Chaudhry for  
reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: Despite initial doubts about his inexperience and the GoM decision to abolish the Ministry of Reintegration, new Deputy Prime Minister for Reintegration Victor Osipov has won over many of the initial skeptics. In a meeting with the Ambassador on October 9, Osipov, who kept all of ex-Minister Sova's team on board, expressed the GoM's readiness to upgrade the U.S. and the EU from observers to negotiators in the 5-plus-2 process. The Ambassador urged Osipov to focus on getting status negotiations launched, briefed the DPM on the October 6 meeting of the 3-plus-2 in Vienna, and assured Osipov of our commitment to Moldova's territorial integrity and sovereignty over all territory within its borders. End Summary.

Osipov Working Well with Reintegration Staff  
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¶2. (C) The new GoM's abolition of the Ministry for Reintegration and nomination of Osipov -- a journalist with no prior experience with Transnistria issues -- as DPM for Reintegration had been roundly criticized by the Communists and by a number of local observers. However, as the Ambassador was escorted upstairs for an October 6 meeting with Osipov, an aide to former Minister of Reintegration Sova who accompanied us whispered that "things are going much better than expected." Osipov had not fired anyone from Sova's staff, and was working well with them.

¶3. (C) At the meeting, Osipov was flanked by Sova stalwarts such as Deputy Minister Ion Stavila. The new DPM explained that he had been confronted by an unusual situation in which the Ministry of Reintegration had been eliminated as a structure. The new GoM was still in the process of resolving how it would restructure the Transnistria portfolio. Osipov said that his plan was to keep the entire team from the old Ministry within his office, as they were experienced and knowledgeable professionals. (Osipov's aides beamed with pleasure at these words and the Ambassador's echoed praise for their professionalism.)

Osipov Envisions Expanded Role for U.S. and EU  
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¶4. (C) Osipov said that the new government was committed to the idea of having the European Union and the United States play a more active role in the 5-plus-2 process. However, Osipov noted, he had not yet made any policy decision on this.

15. (C) The Ambassador counseled that Osipov should focus on the issue of resolving Transnistria's status. The Ambassador noted that it did not matter what the USG was called, observer or negotiator, we would play the same active role in supporting the 5-plus-2 process.

16. (C) The Ambassador suggested and Osipov readily agreed that the Transnistria conflict was actually one of the easiest problems to solve -- if there were will to solve it. Both agreed that it was unnatural for the country to be divided, and that many people have contacts on both sides. Osipov was reassured by the Ambassador's articulation of the two basic principles the USG supported in the settlement talks: the sovereignty of Moldova over all of its territory and Moldova's territorial integrity within its borders.

Readout on 3-plus-2 in Vienna  
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17. (C) The Ambassador also provided a read-out on the Vienna 3-plus-2 meeting which took place October 6. Osipov said he was pleased with the principles articulated in the final statement. He noted that he had heard that the Ambassador had worked hard to defend the necessary principles and ensure that the balance in that final statement was correct.

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Comment  
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18. (C) Osipov has stepped in at a difficult time. Since the Alliance for European Integration won a parliamentary majority and took over the GoM, there has been a flow of statements from Tiraspol criticizing the Alliance's "pro-Romanian" orientation, suggesting both that there is no one now to negotiate with and that Transnistria would rather go its own way. In addition, it will be hard for Chisinau to take meaningful action during the current period of uncertainty surrounding the presidential elections, and the pro-Communist media message that the new government will be "anti-Russian" is being used by Tiraspol as an excuse for further foot-dragging.

19. (C) Although critics had charged that Osipov was inexperienced and not up to the job, he has made a very good first impression. Instead of carrying out a series of politicized firings, he wisely kept Sova's knowledgeable staff on board and appears to have won their allegiance and cooperation. He will need their institutional memory as he confronts the challenges of his portfolio.

CHAUDHRY